

WIESBADENER BRIEF 2024



DEAR FRIENDS OF WIESBADEN,

it's that time again. I am sitting at my desk, looking out at an unfortunately dreary city today and would like to take a glance at Wiesbaden with you just before the year draws to an end. But before doing so, dear readers, may I ask you a question? Are you an "everything digital" person or are you, like me, one of those people for whom there is still a certain sense of pleasure in the haptic form? Either way, you can read the Wiesbaden letter online and on paper. And that's a good thing too.

Even if the weather is stubborn about brightening up and much of the news in this world spreads darkness, you can still brighten up the day. The term brighten up will accompany me throughout the letter this time. The good mood at the "blue-yellow" Twinkling Star Christmas Market with its glowing lilies is enlightening, as is the imposing 29-metres-high Christmas tree in front of City Hall. The Ferris wheel at Mauritiusplatz is turning and pan to the Bowling Green where "Wiesbaden on Ice" will draw not only Wiesbaden locals for the second time. The ice rink will be magically attracting crowds right into January, not least due to the shows. And not only Martin Michel, head of Congress & Marketing, considers this offer from the Sporthilfe Wiesbaden (sport aid association) an enormous enhancement but is also delighted that a five-year contract has been agreed.

The Wiesbaden letter is published by the Friends of the Wiesbaden Foundation, the former Kur- und Verkehrsverein (spa and tourist association), printed and dispatched throughout the world. First of all, I would like to mention one of the projects that deserves

more attention here: the small Roman open-air museum with its 15 (now restored) replicas dating from four centuries, which the Foundation has had made since 1990. After the laborious restoration of the Heidenmauer, the last remaining construction from Wiesbaden's Roman times, and the Römertor (designed by municipal architect, Felix Genzmer, in the early 20th century), Helmut von Scheidt, Deputy Chairman of the Friends, recommends visitors to stop there for a visit.

Let us stay with the citizen's foundation, whose many diverse activities you can Read about on their website. That the German Foundations conference is taking place in Wiesbaden in May can without doubt be considered appreciation for our city and the Foundation. Prior to this, interested parties will have the opportunity in February to learn about how they can create something lasting in their lifetime, how to bequeath, donate, bestow, at the inheritance law days. Thomas Michel, Chairman of the Foundation since the very beginning, calls on the citizens together with Director, Dr. Alrun Schöblier to: "Get involved in shaping your city". And Alrun Schöblier appeals: "After all, everyone has something close to their heart!". The Foundation focuses not least on the younger people in particular and encourages them to engage in social and creative projects. This has already been achieved with the "Impact Festival" in "heimathafen" in the "Altes Gericht", an attraction for the young generation. And let's not forget: in 2025, we in Wiesbaden will find out for the tenth time what

prize-worthy projects the young people have come up with at the “Leonardo School Award”.

It is also perfect that the new donors, Hillu and Dietmar Robrecht, want their fund to be used for climate projects from young adults and youths. This is great news for the highly motivated team in the Haus der Stiftung at Michelsberg, which is pursuing its wide range of tasks with great expertise. While talking to Thomas Michel about the Foundation on a recent visit to his shop on the “rue”, he drew my attention once again to successful projects including the district historians and the “Leseritter” (knights who read out loud) among others. The chairman who celebrated his 70th birthday this year does not want to make a fuss about the fact that he will be closing his carpet business, which recently celebrated 125 years of family tradition, in 2025. Many people will miss the institution “Teppich Michel” on Wilhelmstraße.

From the shop on the “rue”, we look over to the other side of the street, to the Museum Reinhard Ernst (mre), where, by the way, this year’s donors meeting took place. Great appreciation of the youth is also demonstrated in the building for abstract art – by being fully reserved in the mornings for school classes and other education groups free of charge. “Booked out until the end of February”, donor, builder-owner and collector, Reinhard Ernst tells me during a phone call. Yes, and that since the opening of the Museum for Abstract Art in June, more than 80,000 visitors have come from Wiesbaden and abroad, is a wonderful development for Wiesbaden. Reinhard Ernst is himself delighted when he can talk to individual guests in his “sugar cube” designed by the architect, Fumihiko Maki, who regrettably passed shortly before the opening. He recently spoke with a couple, about 80 years old, who had undertaken a daytrip all the way from Luxembourg to the mre and were enthralled. Perhaps the couple also dropped into the neighbouring MuWi, the state museum for art and nature, which is always well worth a visit. The 200th anniversary will be celebrated here from April 2025. It all began with civic engagement in the Erbprinzenpalais (today IHK building). The programme is ready to go. The greatest wish still has to be implemented: at last, the start to planning of the urgently needed extension, which has fortunately been endorsed by the State of Hessen. The Friends of the Museum Wiesbaden had reason to celebrate lately: they have been supporting “their” house for 30 years. As per November, the society boasts 2,414 members and, since recently, the “Young Friends of the Museum”, initiated by them, are also under their roof.

Another positive occurrence in the Museum: the State Theatre is making a guest appearance here with the play, “Alte Meister” after the novel by Thomas Bernhard. Well worth seeing! The new artistic direction for the post-Laufenberg era, Beate Heine and Dorothea Hartmann, have assumed their work and are perceptibly making their own mark. The two artistic directors want to keep asking the question: “What legacy have we found? How do we deal with it?”. Great change, exciting times at the theatre ...

Our city has an abundance of cultural highlights to offer, which makes it worth taking a look at the free scene. It is good that the Kulturbeirat (culture committee) is close at hand and acts as a voice for everyone. I can only name examples here: the Women’s Museum has existed for 40 years and the level at which the work of the determined founders is recognised was strikingly evident at

the anniversary meeting. The cultural scene is unimaginable without the Schlachthof, where the cultural centre is celebrating its 30th anniversary with the man who has been there from the very start, Gerhard Schulz. The first concert was held in the Räucherzimmer there in December 1994. The Nassauischer Kunstverein has a new, full-time director with Lotte Dinse for the first time. Acts such as the Exground-Filmfestival, Fernseh-Krimi (whodunit) Festival, Natourale – Nature & Travel-Festival, Literature Prize Award, this time to Martina Hefter, are always remarkable. And shortly before the editing deadline for this letter, I attended the presentation of the Culture Award of the City worth EUR 10,000 in City Hall: what is done for children and youths by the singing academy in the Martin Luther parish, what the young people have to offer, is highly impressive. Take a look at these choirs’ websites! And allow me to quote a little girl from a video: “When I sing, I feel like I am floating!” Here is a good place to make reference to a music event that attracted young musicians from all over the world for a second time: The International Flute Competition Ferdinand W. Neess held in the Museum Wiesbaden.

There is only space to mention just a few birthdays and anniversaries here: 175 years since the consecration of the Bonifatiuskirche (church), the Kurier campaign “Ihnen leuchtet kein Licht” (No light shines for them) with its aid programmes has been indispensable for 70 years. The German-American / International Women’s Club has been around for just as long, The Casino-Gesellschaft has been enhancing our city for 75 years and maintains close contact with the Friends of the Wiesbaden Foundation in the Kulturinitiative. How lovely that the Thermine (bus-train) has been driving through the city for 20 years, for as long as “Wiesbaden engagiert” has been in existence. And in 2025, the Clown Doctors have not least been brightening up dark hours with young and old patients, now in the new buildings of the Helios-HSK-Kliniken too. The major move – including into a new children’s hospital – went smoothly.

When speaking of building, I just remembered: the former department head of urban development, Jörg Jordan, later Hessian minister and project developer, celebrated his 85th birthday. At one time, he brought about many positive things in Wiesbaden. Now the citizen of honour and Dr. phil. has written a book that is well worth reading: “Jahrhunderterbe Wiesbaden – Stadterneuerung in der Stadt des Historismus. Konflikte und Perspektiven”.

Even if the tenet of the letter is to primarily brighten things up, we still have to talk about some sad news. On the passing of persons who we remember fondly: for example, the FDP old hand, Wolfgang Gerhardt, active on federal level for many years and parliamentary party leader as well as chairman of the Naumann-Stiftung, passed at the age of 80. He was a donor and a member of the curatorium of the Foundation. Michael Feine, who was a committed Social Democrat in city politics for decades and chairman of the urban district association, Casa, passed suddenly leaving an enormous gap in voluntary work. He was 77. Dr. Dieter Arlet (84), frontman of the Juristenband and retired chief prosecutor, the cult singer Porky Kronier (65), Dr. Hanns-Dietrich Rahn (72) medical doctor and active volunteer at the Reit- und Fahrclub among others as well as Christel Glöckner (75), known as “Puffer-Christl” departed for ever. They all had many fans in Wiesbaden and beyond.



A new donor and grateful members of the Foundation: Dietmar Robrecht (centre) surrounded by Director Dr. Alrun Schößler, Deputy Chairwoman Dr. Marie-Luise Stoll-Steffan, Treasurer Dominique Pontani and Chairman Thomas Michel (from left). Right: lots of information and a good atmosphere at the Impact Festival in the "Altes Gericht".



A highlight for the Hessian state capital, which even attracts guests from abroad: the XXL ice rink – a guarantee for great fun and super shows by the Sporthilfe Wiesbaden on the Bowling Green in 2024 for the second time.



Acoustic pleasure with the youth choir: beautiful voices in City Hall where the Martin Luther parish Protestant singing academy was awarded the Culture Award of the City for their great engagement.



Well worth it: a stroll to the "Römertor" with Roman replicas. Here, the memorial stone for Caius Valerius Crispus (original in the Stadtmuseum). Right: water fountain fun on Luisenplatz.



Women power in the Hessian State Theatre: artistic directors Dorothea Hartmann and Beate Heine at the opening of their first season.



The city council has decided: Sonja and Reinhard Ernst become citizens of honour of Wiesbaden! The committed donors were awarded the Order of Merit of the Federal Republic of Germany, 1. class, by Minister President, Boris Rhein, at the opening of the Museum Reinhard Ernst.



Those interested in politics are all eyes on Wiesbaden: the Grünen federal party conference was held here, in the RheinMain CongressCenter. One of the many events ensuring the venue is well-booked.



One of the highlights in the Kurpark in 2024: Max Giesinger was one of the stars of the Rheingau Musik Festival that drew large crowds. There will be several concerts in the Konzertmuschel in 2025.

Let us take a trip through the city. No, not to complain about (too many) construction sites or empty buildings or, as motorists, find the new speed limits on some streets between 20, 30, 40 km/h strange ... Rather, let us look, for example, at the water fountains so well received during the summer, a great place to play on Luisenplatz and, in the same place, the new additional weekly market on Thursdays. The empty pond in the Kurpark might be surprising. However, this will look different again in the spring. Something has first to be done for protection against flooding. Should we move quickly to the Neroberg? It's worth a visit in the winter too: "Martha, die Hütte" invites you to come by – and the Chateau Nero in the vineyards serves mulled wine.

We should keep our eye on an important election date: several candidates will stand for election as Lord Mayor on 9th March. It is fascinating that the CDU and FDP have joined forces and with the independent designer Thilo von Debschitz (one of the two owners of Q, the multiple award-winning agency for communication design) want to win against SPD incumbent Gert-Uwe Mende. The only woman in the race is Gesine Bonnet, who is acting for the Grünen in the city council. One person who will certainly be following the election with interest is former Lord Mayor, Achim Exner. The busy Social Democrat celebrated his 80th at the beginning of December. Many will know "Achim's Rathaus" in the "Blauer Salon" in Biebrich, where a lot of people found advice and support and there was a cultural programme for a long time.

Apropos politics: the Grünen federal party conference had the whole world looking at Wiesbaden shortly after the collapse of the "traffic light" government in Berlin. Robert Habeck was selected as candidate for the office of Federal Chancellor in the RheinMain CongressCenter – and unity was demonstrated.

"Our booking situation is good", says CEO Martin Michel. For example, the Ehrlich Brothers will be appearing with their magic show on two consecutive dates in the CongressCenter next year. And that the German Veterinary Surgeons Convention is coming to Wiesbaden can also be booked as a success. Capacity

utilisation is also good in the Kurhaus, where the Whiskey Trade Fair was held for the first time. It had taken place in the Frankfurt Palmengarten to date. Wiesbaden has more charm according to the event organisers... The Rheingau Musikfestival continues to be a visitor magnet with concerts in the Kurpark too. Gianna Nannini or "Reverheld" for example have been announced for 2025. In 2024, Jonas Kaufmann and Max Giesinger among others celebrated open-air events with their fans there

The new partner network mentioned by Martin Michel sounds very promising: 18 members, e.g. hotels, the museums mre and MuWi, casino, Theater im Pariser Hof... They penned the slogan "We love culture" this year and successfully pursued the goal of promoting Wiesbaden as a city of art and culture. For 2025, the network has planned a "Messenger campaign". A concept has already been drawn up. Congenial when one wants to celebrate the city that boasts highly positive numbers of tourists in this way. By the way, a cultural stroll "Route Sixty Five" is also in the making on the initiative of artists and can be of help in this context.

All of this helps brighten things up. It is fitting that for the first time we will have a light show in front of the Kurhaus on New Year's Eve – instead of fireworks. I like that!

And now, as I want to wish you the very best for 2025, the sun has just started to shine outside my window!

Be positive and stay connected
with the city and your Foundation.

Sending you the very best
wishes in December

Ingeborg Salm-Boost



WIESBADEN NEEDS FRIENDS!

With your membership and your commitment to the Friends of the Wiesbaden Stiftung e. V., you are documenting your solidarity with the city and helping in the practical implementation of our ideas.

Purpose of the foundation

- Promotion of civic commitment
- Art and culture
- Preservation and conservation of historic sights
- Environmental protection and nature conservation
- City history, preservation of regional traditions

Our connection to the Wiesbaden Stiftung?

The idea is clear: What works well large-scale, we can achieve on our projects too. We create synergies: From citizens for citizens – two institutions for everyone.

www.die-wiesbaden-stiftung.de

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Freunde der Wiesbaden Stiftung e. V. (Gesellschaft zur Förderung Wiesbadens) im Hause der IHK Wiesbaden, Wilhelmstraße 24-26, 65183 Wiesbaden · Tel.: (0611) 34 14 86 20 · E-Mail: info@die-wiesbaden-stiftung.de · Web: www.die-wiesbaden-stiftung.de
Nassauische Sparkasse, Iban DE47 5105 0015 0100 0444 47 · Wiesbadener Volksbank, Iban DE87 5109 0000 0000 5624 08
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